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The decked up temple at Ayodhya; and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the consecration ceremony of Ram Lalla on Monday | PTI

> *Ram is not fire but energy, Ram is not dispute but solution, Ram is not merely ours but of everyone and Ram is not only the present but also eternal*
>
> **NARENDRA MODI, PM**

CONSECRATION CEREMONY OVER; ARMY HELICOPTERS SHOWER PETALS; PM CALL TO BUILD THE FOUNDATION OF A STRONG, CAPABLE, DIVINE INDIA

EPOCH-MAKING MOMENT, SAYS MODI AS RAM BACK IN ABODE

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Ayodhya

IT was a watershed moment in the country's history as infant Ram's idol was consecrated at a majestic new temple in Ayodhya where he is believed have been born. That the temple came after centuries of struggle held its own significance.

At 12 noon, Prime Minister Narendra Modi climbed 32 stairs to reach the *garbha griha* (sanctum sanctorum) of the temple where the *pran pratishtha* (consecration) ceremony culminated in the final rituals including *Chakshu Unmilan* or the opening of eyes of Ram Lalla, his darshan and consecration as presiding deity of Ayodhya and India.

As the rituals proceeded, Modi as the chief *yajman* (host of the deity) held a lotus in his hand. The *pran pratistha* began at 12.29.08 pm and concluded at 12.30.32 pm — within the most sacred window of 84 seconds of the *mool muhurt* of the *Abhijeet Muhurt* in *Mrigashira nakshatra*. Consecration over, Ram Lalla provided darshan to all. The temple premises reverberated with chants of *Jai Shri Ram* by the invitees.

Addressing the invitees later, Modi gave a call to go beyond the grand mandir's construction to build the foundation of a "strong, capable and divine" India of the next 1,000 years.

Sharing his experience of the divine consciousness inside the *garbh griha*, the PM said he did not have appropriate words to share his emotions. "My body was pulsating with energy and the mind is devoted to the moment of *pran pratishtha*," he shared.

It was is not just the consecration of a new idol but that of the unwavering faith in the Indian culture manifested in the form of Ram, who is the embodiment of human values and the highest ideals, he said.

Getting emotional with his eyes welling up, Modi took a brief pause before apologising to Lord Ram for the delay in consecrating him in his abode. "Today that vacuum has been filled, surely, Shri Ram will forgive us," he said.

"January 22, 2024 is not a mere date on the calendar, it is the starting point of a new *kaal chakra* (wheel of time)," the PM said, adding this is India's time to move forward. "We all have waited for this era, this period. Now we will not stop. We will continue to reach the heights of development."

Describing Modi as a *tapasvi* (doing penance), RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat called upon the countrymen to back him in his endeavor of nation building. "*Pradhan Mantri ji ne tap kiya ab humko bhi tap karna hai* (PM did penance. Now it is our turn to do so)," he said.

He called it a golden day when the country regained its pride with the enthronement of Ram Lalla in his abode, adding many generations had made sacrifices to usher in the present moment, which came after 500 years.

The day began with *mangal dhwani* (auspicious sound) by 50 musical instruments, including conch shells, amid a stream of guests and dignitaries thronging the temple site. Playback singers like Sonu Nigam, Anuradha Paudwal and Shankar Mahadevan then set the tone for the day by paying tribute to Lord Ram through their rendition of bhajans.

Army helicopters showered flower petals on the temple as the consecration ceremony was underway. Celebrations broke out across the country as they watched the event on their television screens. **P9,P10**

AIRPORT HANDLED 100 CHARTERED FLIGHTS

The Ayodhya airport handled around 100 chartered flights on Monday as people flew in to the city to attend the consecration ceremony. Around 50 of those flights were business jets. As many as 8,000 people, including prominent politicians, industrialists, film stars, sportspersons, diplomats, and judges were invited

Muslims, Hindus worship Ram at dargahs, masjids

RAGHOTTAM KOPPAR @ Gadag/Hubballi

IN a celebration Hindu-Muslim brotherhood, the two communities celebrated Ram Prana Pratisthana and performed Rama naam japa and bhajans at a dargah at Hunasikatti village in Naragund taluk of Gadag district on Monday.

The village is well known for harmony between the two communities over the last few decades. Villagers celebrate Deepavali, Ramzan, Ugadi and Eid together, irrespective of which religion they belong to.

The villagers wanted to celebrate the consecration in a unique way and came up with the idea of holding the pujas at the dargah. On Monday morning, Hindus and Muslims joined together to clean the Dargah and wrote Jai Shri Ram at the entrance. Villagers invited two archaks for the Shodashopachara worship, and members from both communities sat inside the Dargah and recited mantras and performed Rama naam japa. Some youth sang Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram, while others recited bhajans. An image of Bharat Mata was placed and a puja was performed to send out a message that all are Indians and equal, irrespective of caste and creed. **P4**

Hindus and Muslims offer puja to Lord Ram at Noorani Mosque in Haiyal village of Hubballi taluk | EXPRESS

I AM NOT AN ATHEIST, DECLARES SIDDU

Bengaluru: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who did not declare a holiday for the consecration of Ram Lalla at Ayodhya on Monday, made a point that he is not an atheist. He inaugurated the Rama Sita Lakshmana Temple and the 33-ft monolithic Anjaneya Swamy statue at Hirandahalli village of Bidarahalli hobli in Mahadevapura in Bengaluru East. Chanting 'Jai Shri Ram!' along with the public, he said the slogan is not someone's private property, but belonged to every devotee of Lord Ram. He also participated in the Maha Kumbhabhisheka organised by the Sri Rama Temple Trust, which built the temple. "God does not accept worship if you are unrighteous (adharma) and inhuman, and worship in a dramatic manner. The ideal of Sri Rama is that all people should live with equality and love," he said. **P4**

DALITS SHOO AWAY SIMHA FROM EVENT IN MYSURU | P4

Rahul Gandhi along with party leaders and supporters sit in protest after he was not allowed to visit a monastery in Assam | PTI

Rahul stopped from going to monastery

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @ Guwahati

CONGRESS party leader Rahul Gandhi, who was prevented by the police in Assam on Monday from going to Batadrava Than, the birthplace of 15th-16th century saint-reformer Sankardeva, took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi stating "only one person can go to a temple today".

"*Aaj sirf ek vyakti mandir mein ja sakta hain* (Only one person can go to a temple today). I was invited there on the 11th (January). Now, they have been pressured. Obviously, they have been ordered from the top. They don't want me to go," Rahul said.

The Congress leader, who was in the state leading the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, planned to visit the Batadrava Than and offer prayers on January 22, between 8 am and 9 am as the monastery holds importance for the followers of neo-Vaishnavism.

On January 21, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma asked Rahul to visit the monastery past 3 pm on Monday as the Ayodhya Ram temple consecration was slated for the morning. If the Congress leader visits the monastery in the morning, then news channels could end up showcasing it as a competition between the Ram temple and the monastery, Sarma said.

After police blocked Rahul from proceeding to the monastery, he sat on a dharna. However, Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, who was with Rahul, was allowed to visit the monastery. Later, the yatra left for Meghalaya.

INQUIRY ON

Toxic fumes kill 2 labourers in Bidar

RAMAKRISHNA BADSESHI @ Humnabad (Bidar district)

TWO labourers working at a chemical waste processing unit died after allegedly inhaling poisonous fumes on the premises of the company, on the outskirts of Humnabad town of Bidar district, late on Sunday evening.

The deceased — Mohammad Shabad (21) of Waddanakera village of Humnabad taluk and Indrajeet (25) of Madhya Pradesh — were working at the warehouse of Shri Prasanna Pre-Processing Company Ltd when they died around 9 pm, stated a press note released by Bidar Deputy Commissioner Govind Reddy on Monday. He said the spread of alleged poisonous fumes was limited to the company premises and people in surrounding areas need not panic.

Shabad and Indrajeet were loading and unloading chemical waste, collected from industries, into trucks when the incident occurred, the DC stated.

A preliminary investigation by the inspector of Factories and Boilers and Pollution Control Board indicated that the deaths could be due to the fumes and smell from the hazardous chemical waste. But the exact cause of death will be known once the inspector gives a report. The factory will be closed until further orders, he said.

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre, who is also Bidar district in-charge minister, said he instructed officials from the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board to assess if safety measures have been taken by industries.

The police and officials started an investigation to find out if there were any lapses by the company.

EXPRESS READ

Bilkis Bano case: All 11 convicts surrender

Ahmedabad: All 11 convicts in the Bilkis Bano case surrendered at the Godhra sub jail in Gujarat's Panchmahal district late on Sunday night, in keeping with the deadline set by the Supreme Court. The SC had on Friday rejected the convicts' plea for more time to surrender, and asked them to turn themselves in to authorities by Sunday.

It's final, 5.37 crore voters in state

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

Karnataka has 5.37 crore voters, including 17,937 who are over 100 years old, according to the final list of voters released by Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Manoj Kumar Meena on Monday.

There are 5,37,85,815 voters, with 2,69,33,750 male, 2,68,47,145 female and 4,920 others. The draft list had 5,33,77,162 voters, including 2,68,02,838 male, 2,65,69,428 female and 4,920 other voters.

Among the 224 Assembly constituencies, Bengaluru South has the largest number of 7,17,201 voters. The Sringeri Assembly segment in Chikkamagaluru district has the least number of voters at 1,67,556. In the Parliament segment, Bengaluru North has the highest number of over 31 lakh voters and Udupi-Chikkamagaluru the least at 15 lakh voters.

If eligible voters' names are not in the electoral rolls, they can register their names in the electoral rolls immediately. They should verify and confirm their names in the electoral roll without delay, he said. **CONTINUED ON: P5**

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